

VZCZCXYZ0007
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVL #0661 3421537
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 081537Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY VILNIUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3951

C O N F I D E N T I A L VILNIUS 000661

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/03/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [LH](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S INITIAL MEETING WITH INTERIOR MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In her introductory call on Interior Minister Raimundas Palaitis, Ambassador Derse heard that all public-safety and other Ministry employees would face 2 percent salary cuts under the GOL's proposed 2010 budget. These severe budgetary constraints have left the GOL with very limited financial means to fund programs designed to combat trafficking in persons (TIP) in 2009 and 2010, though some funding will be restored after that. The Minister affirmed TIP remains an important priority for the GOL, and reductions in funding are temporary and due only to the extreme financial pressure the government is under. They do not signal a lessening of commitment to fight the problem. The minister also noted that NGOs are very active and the GOL continues to do what it can to support them. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador Derse paid an introductory call on the Minister of Interior, Raimundas Palaitis, on December 3. Vice Minister Stanislovas Liutkevicius, who is the national coordinator for Lithuania's anti-TIP efforts, also attended. The minister said the GOL's 2010 budget might be approved on December 10; budget discussions and preparations have consumed nearly all the time and effort of government and parliamentary officials in recent weeks. The proposed budget calls for police, firefighters and all other Interior Ministry staff to take pay cuts of about 2 percent, the Minister told the Ambassador.

¶3. (C) Lithuania, which has compiled a good record on anti-TIP efforts in recent years, will have limited funding to pay for anti-trafficking programs it has supported in the past, the ministry officials said. The GOL has spent about 400,000 LTL (175,000 USD) annually on such programs in recent years, but has zeroed out those budget lines for 2009 and 2010 because of the economic crisis, Liutkevicius said. The funding, most of which goes to help NGOs that provide support to trafficking victims, is expected to be restored for 2011 and 2012, he said. In all, Liutkevicius said, the GOL has spent about 5 million LTL (2.2 million USD) on anti-trafficking programs, mostly in the form of assistance to NGOs working with victims. The Norwegians and Swiss have stepped in to help support NGOs that the GOL could not afford to assist for this year and next year, though, and the NGOs continue to operate, he said. Police and prosecutors continue to work on trafficking cases and the GOL is doing all it can to fight trafficking, but budgetary problems have made that more difficult, he said.

DERSE